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The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development

Letter dated 9 April 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to the letter from the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Nicaragua to the United Nations (A/53/882) addressed to you concerning agenda item 44, which makes reference to my letter of 13 January 1999 (A/53/795).

My delegation wishes to express its deep appreciation for the willingness of the distinguished Permanent Representative of Nicaragua to clarify the term he used to refer to the armed Costa Rican authorities, calling our civilian public forces "military". However, we consider that the reasons on which he based his explanation are not entirely correct. We understand how the "linguistic habit" of the Permanent Representative of Nicaragua, with respect to the term he uses to describe the armed authorities responsible for guarding the borders, fits in with the historical context of our sister country. The situation in Costa Rica has been very different, however, as illustrated by its history of over 100 years of democracy and 50 years without an army.

Accordingly, it should be noted that the laws of Costa Rica have not simply given a particular name to its national security forces. In proscribing the existence of an army, the Political Constitution of Costa Rica embodied a special aspiration and vision of what Costa Ricans desire their public forces to be. In Costa Rica, the concept of armed authorities is not only a matter of terminology, but of nature. For this reason, beyond what is established in our Constitution and irrespective of linguistic concerns, in our country we have developed a habit of living without military forces, a habit that has become well known to the international community, especially to our neighbouring countries.

With regard to the other aspects of the letter, we also declare that there is no dispute whatsoever between our countries concerning matters of territorial sovereignty. As for the right to freedom of navigation on the San Juan River, Costa Rica also reaffirms its willingness to abide by the provisions of the Cañas-Jerez Treaty and the Cleveland decision, to ensure that these instruments are correctly applied. Therefore, Costa Rica reaffirms its

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belief that its right to freedom of navigation under these legal instruments clearly includes the deployment of its civilian police forces for control purposes.

Lastly, Sir, I should like to say that Costa Rica, in view of its excellent relations with Nicaragua, reiterates its firm desire to continue to strengthen the ties of friendship and cooperation that unite the Governments and peoples of the two Republics.

I should be grateful if you would have this clarification circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 44.

(*Signed*) Bernd **Niehaus**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative